



Newsletter 17 – November 2012 and Christmas Issue



The Committee wishes you all a Happy and Peaceful Christmas. We look forward to corresponding with and meeting more of our Members in 2013.

Welcome to our seventeenth Newsletter. We invite you to contribute articles, tips, questions and answers for others to share. Feedback is always welcome. Have you missed an edition? Read the archived Newsletters on our website.

November Meeting Review

Over 30 members and friends filled the meeting room at Brecon Library to listen to the speakers.

Helen Whyte gave the first in her new series of short illustrated talks on *Family History Sources*, focusing on free website sources for name searches.

Susan Ballance spoke on the *History of Abercamlais House*, concentrating on the lives of the families who occupied the property from the Dark Ages through to the present.

Both talks are available in the Members' Section of our website, under Resources > Meetings.

NB: A detailed catalogue of the Abercamlais Estate Papers can be searched on-line on the Powys Archives website at www.powys.gov.uk; the catalogue itself can be found via this link: www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=4169&L=0

The families of Abercamlais and Penpont are related. The Penpont Estate Papers catalogue is searchable on-line at the National Library of Wales website (www.llgc.org.uk) in its pre-1999 /SYS catalogue. The catalogue itself is at <http://isys.llgc.org.uk/isysquery/irl4bb/18/doc>.

Each house has its own illustrated website at www.abercamlais.co.uk and www.penpont.com/

This link to *Archives Wales* www.archiveswales.org.uk/anw/quicksearch.php?term=abercamlais will take you to a description of the family and the contents of the estate papers for both houses.

Hot off the Press

The Brecon County Times December 24th 1881

The descriptions of the tradesmen's display of decorated Christmas shop windows and the show of poultry in Brecon are very interesting. The descriptions of the food traders include:

Mr John Benjamin, as usual, had a very tempting lot of goods, consisting of choice Christmas fruits, sparkling wines, hocks, moselles, French cherries in brandy, ports, and sherries and a choice selection of bob-bons.

Mr Samuel Lewis, High Street, had on view a very choice selection of dessert and pudding fruits of the choicest

obtainable descriptions, comprising Muscatel and Valencia raisons, currents, figs, French plums, Tafilet dates, Elva and Carbad plums, prunes, a variety of crystallized fruits, oranges, lemonms, graps, almonds, nuts, Normandy pippins, French prelines, chocolates, cakes, biscuits, and a splendid variety of **cosaques** of the newest designs."

What are *cosaques*?

"Tom Smith, was a confectioner who created the first crackers after being inspired by the shape of Parisienne bon-bons (sweets wrapped in paper and twisted at both ends) and the crackling, popping sound of a fresh log being thrown onto a roaring fire. He had had some earlier success introducing bon-bons to Britain (and adding his own touch - a romantic motto printed on a slip of paper and hidden inside the wrapping), and in the 1860s, after experimenting with chemically treated slips of paper in order to perfect a startling but safe mini-explosion, he increased the size of his 'bon-bons', replaced the sweets inside with little novelties (while keeping the romantic motto), and the first crackers were born. These crackers were referred to as 'cosaques' (although

the company itself was known as Tom Smith's Crackers), and they were an immediate success with the Victorian public. Inevitably, crackers were soon being made and sold by numerous companies, although Smith was determined to preserve the status of his own branded crackers."

From: <http://fayelbooth.blogspot.co.uk/2009/12/victorian-christmas-week-part-three.html>

And the description of the Show of Poultry included;

At Mrs Wilson's High Street, there was one of the finest displays of dressed poultry and ornamented butter we have ever seen. The geese (40 in number) and turkeys were of extraordinary size and weight, the former averaging from 14lbs to 18lbs and

two of the latter scaled 20lbs and 22 ½ lbs. the collection came from Buckland and was dressed by Miss Margaret Jenkins. This splendid show attracted the attention of a large crowd of spectators.

Websites

www.probertencyclopaedia.com/ this is an online encyclopaedia but the gazetteer link on the left of the homepage leads to good information on the individual counties as well as linking you to a series of maps of various areas of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

www.british-history.ac.uk/ "British History Online is the digital library containing some of the core printed primary and secondary sources for the medieval and modern history of the British Isles. Created by the Institute of Historical Research and the History of Parliament Trust, we aim to support academic and personal users around the world in their learning, teaching and research."

A Good Read

A good read at this time of the year is the *Diary of Rev Francis Kilvert*, which covers the period from 1870 to 1879. Published in three volumes in 1938, 1939 and 1940, Kilvert's Diary was immediately acclaimed as a piece of social history, equivalent to the novels of Thomas Hardy.

From 1863 to 1864, Kilvert was curate to his father at Langley Burrell, Wiltshire and in 1865 he became curate of Clyro, Radnorshire; he remained there until 1872 when he re-joined his father at Langley Burrell. From 1876 to 1877 he was Vicar of St Harmon, Radnorshire, and from 1877 to his death in 1879 he was Vicar of Bredwardine, Herefordshire. In the diary, he recorded the day to day experiences of a curate in the Welsh Borders and he expertly described the minutiae of country life especially of the ordinary people of the area. Caught between two worlds, being neither of the gentry nor the working class, his writing captures the awkwardness of his position as a clergyman and his frustration with such a life. His detailed descriptions of the life cycle of events and of the rural traditions of the area are excellent. The diary can be read in a variety of formats, from the three-volume edition to single volume selections from the diaries.

Useful websites for more information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Kilvert

<http://www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk/>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jan/19/fiction6>

NEXT MEETING

Date and time: Wednesday, 2nd January 2013 at 2.00pm

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject: "Starting Family History" by Society Members. Bring along your queries.

BLFHS WEBSITE: Our website address: www.blfhs.co.uk

CONTACT DETAILS:

If you wish to respond to or comment on an item in this newsletter, or contribute to the next newsletter or to our website, please contact our Chairperson:

Hilary Williams
Maesycoed
39 Camden Road
Brecon LD3 7RT
Tel: 01874 624432

E-mail: chair@blfhs.co.uk